

Momo's The Word

WASHINGTON — Certainly Frank Church's Senate Select Committee on Intelligence operations is covering up. Whom? Well, the answer is in an FBI report, now tightly sealed, which reveals that the then Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy knew all about the CIA's hiring of the cocky little Chicago Mafia chief, the late Sam (Momo) Giancana, to assassinate Fidel Castro. And that report is in Sen. Church's tightly clasped hand.

That document will prove that early in the '60s, Bob Kennedy went to J. Edgar Hoover's office to brief the FBI director on the CIA's plot. There is every logical reason to believe that Bobby Kennedy approved the long daily intimacy between a CIA executive officer and the Chicago mob boss.

But what really is vital here is — why, of all the Maffiosi, was Giancana picked for the job?

It was just the sort of assignment eagerly sought by top mobsters. From then on out, Momo could strut even more than he had. He could blackmail the federal government — as Hoover angrily pointed out to Bobby. Further, Bob Kennedy was well aware from his then recent experience as the McClellan committee's chief counsel, that Giancana actually knew little about Cuba, its gambling network or the Havana underworld which Momo was supposed to contact.

There are acres of documents, some official, some the result of sharp investigative reporting, stating that the actual liaison with the pre-Castro Cuban officials and ambulators was bantam Meyer Lansky and his associate, the reputed boss of Cuban operations, Santos Traficante.

The latter then was a power in the Florida-Caribbean territory. Yet the CIA goes to Giancana, now disclosed as the friend of the woman friend of the late Jack Kennedy. Why? There's no doubt that since 1956, the late Giancana was operative boss of the Chicago crime syndicate. He trotted at the heels of don Tony Accardo. He was the hotel-motel-restaurant-basketball fix-jukebox kingpin. He specialized in muscle and mayhem, the federals say. But he was strictly Chicago.

So much so that he had to fly to New York in 1965, during the so-called kidnaping period of Joe (Bananas) Bonanno to make certain that the Mafia's national commission didn't touch his territory during the reshuffling of power. The high command met. Momo didn't bully or bellow. He was a muscled mendicant. He kept his territory.

Why then did the CIA go to Giancana? Even the CIA doesn't come knocking on your door and ask if you'll please accept the little package containing a cloak and dagger, or a pill to kill. There were some connections which had connections. But who?

There you get into interlocking circles. Sam Giancana and Frankie Sinatra were close friends. They loved to wing it up together. Frankie's "RatPack" included Peter Lawford, the Kennedys' brother-in-law. And the crooner ran the January 1961 blizzard-bound Kennedy inauguration gala. He and presidential friend Judith Campbell Exner, Bobby Kennedy and lots more went to some of the "same parties."

Further, the lady friend telephones President Kennedy at the White House some 70 times in one year between March 29, 1961, and March 22,

of America's top dons. Which means she didn't read.

Had she been following the McClellan committee hearings she would have known that a Chicago deputy police superintendent had told Bobby Kennedy that Momo was one of Tony Accardo's toughest pieces of muscle, and that he ran with such characters as the "Young Bloods": Sam Battaglia, Marshall Caifano, Phil Alderisio, Sam DeSteffano, Jackie Cerone and other Accardo "soldiers." Few come tougher, or rougher.

It's a bloody tale — and weird. Any one of Momo's companions (unless she spent all her time with him alone) could have told her that Giancana's draft board in 1943 classified him 4F as a "constitutional psychopath." Why would the CIA have picked him? Why would Bobby Kennedy have approved it after he became Attorney General — in the name of his brother the President? And is it logical to believe the Bobby would tell the man he hated, J. Edgar Hoover, and not disclose the plot to his own brother, the President?

And what of the 70 phone calls? Sam Giancana was under surveillance most of his life. Surely his home phones were tapped. Where then are the transcripts of the few conversations Ms. Judith had with the man in the Oval

Office over Giancana's phone?

There are few political men who would have been treated by Sen. Church or his committee as sensitively as they handled Jack Kennedy and friend.

Imagine, will you, if it were discovered that some of Dick Nixon's tapes had conversations with a woman who had called 70 times — a woman who had been an intimate house companion of the mobster who bloodied Chicago's streets, fixed basketball games, was heavy in reputedly crime syndicate jukeboxes and doffed his hat to the Mafia's national commission.

It should all come out. Sam Giancana truly was a sadistic brute in the full Al Capone insensibility. He used some unions as enforcers. He took over and shook down much of the Chicago restaurant business. He played his part as though it was written for an old Warner Brothers Jim Cagney late, late movie.

And now the story is being kept from the citizenry by those who scream it's others who attempt to kill a free press and deplore so piously other restraints on freedom of the press and information.

Objectivity, anyone?